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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet is the first in a series of ten stemming from the view that language is central to learning, that teachers can gain insights into their work and into learning by examining the language of the classroom, and that current language theory can be the means to such insights. The pamphlet contains a description of an informal study undertaken to determine whether second grade students were talking in the mode or register that they preferred to use in class. It includes transcripts of a directed reading lesson, of a social studies/language lesson built around a picture study, and of small group discussions following a field trip. A section containing reflections on the discussions is included. (FL)

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Language in the Classroom: A Series. 1

TELLING, TALKING, AND THINKING IN A GRADE TWO CLASSROOM

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FOREWORD

This pamphlet is one of a series, produced as discussion papers by a group of teachers who participated in a graduate course in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Calgary. In development, the papers reflect the method of the boys of Barbiana: each paper has been shaped and tempered, through several stages by the input of the group. In intent, the series reflects the aims of the pamphlets originated by the Writing Across the Curriculum Project Team of the Institute of Education at the University of London, to whom we are indebted for pointing the way.

The series stems from a view that language is central to learning, that teachers can gain insights into their work and into learning by examining the language of the classroom, and that current language theory can be the means to such insights. Further, the series represents a conviction that teachers are in the best position to understand the heuristic role of language in the classroom as well as to assess the needs of children in the schools and that they are the most likely to find solutions for problems in classroom practice. To realize this potential and to extend their influence, teachers need to offer their ideas and experiences freely and be willing to consider the ideas of their colleagues openly. It is in this spirit of sharing that these pamphlets are published.

We are grateful to Al Kahanoff, Principal of Branton Junior High School in Calgary for his generous editorial assistance and for his help in seeing the pamphlets through publication.

We also wish to thank Miss Lorraine Cockle for the cover design.

James Britton
Merren Chorny

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TELLING, TALKING, AND THINKING IN A GRADE TWO CLASSROOM

All of us are aware that children need to have an opportunity to express themselves in the classroom. We encourage their verbal participation in a number of formal and informal situations. In the informal settings children chatter, gossip or discuss with each other during breaks in activity, on entering and leaving the classroom, and during other times designated by the teacher. These range from highly structured question-and-answer sessions with the whole class, reading groups, activity groups (i.e. group discussions on specific experience or planning for further activity), role playing situations, or any number of settings where children work together at a task.

Since we try to involve all of our students in oral activity, most of us feel that children have ample opportunity to express themselves in class. Yet, in some cases it seems, from the behavior of the child, that we are asking him to give an opinion or answer many more times than he would desire. At other times, we wish that the class would use a lot less oral expression. Despite the above emphasis on children's speech, are they able to express themselves in class to the extent that we think they are able? Certainly we've been told about or may have read about Flander's[1] rule of two-thirds. That is, two-thirds of the time someone is talking in a classroom, two-thirds of that time it is an adult; and two-thirds of the adult's talking is telling - not asking, responding, or encouraging. Well, we know that the research was done some time ago, probably in classrooms different from ours and relates to teachers who weren't as conscious of the need for oral

expression as we are.

Perhaps a more important consideration is whether children are talking in the mode or register that they prefer to use. In Language, the Learner and the School,[2] it is suggested that as we socialize children into the school community we teach them the specialized language of the grade, school and the various subjects. Thus, the linguistic expectations of the home or peer culture. The child may be placed in a situation where he has to function in patterns of talk that are unfamiliar or meaningless. His major need is to organize experience and make some sense out of it in his own terms. Informal talk with his peers may lead to this end. It will take many years of development and schooling before he can deal with situations in the abstract formal language of the scientist, geographer, mathematician, or technologist. Consequently, it may be interesting to examine children's speech in class in order to determine the extent that children are using school and subject language.

I decided to use control as one dimension of a study of children's talk in my classroom. I would look at the simple question of who was doing the talking in my classroom as well as the more complex idea of who was controlling the talk when children were in groups. Further, an analysis of the use of formal or constrained speech patterns in their interaction seemed an appropriate topic to consider.

Another dimension of my study was related to the kind of talk that goes on when children are in a work group. Here, I draw on ideas concerning the basic forms of speech and writing that are fully developed in other sources.[3,4] For our purposes, suffice it to say, that speaking and writing

seem to take three basic forms - expressive, transactional, and poetic. Expressive talk is embedded in the situation and tells us a good deal about the speaker although this may not have been his intent. It relies heavily on the receiver sharing the same situation as the speaker. When things become more explicit and abstract meanings are being conveyed, the language becomes transactional. This type of language is used to get things done in the world and involves the giving or seeking of information as well as attempts to convince others of something. Finally, speech can become an end in itself where a complete construct is provided which stands and makes its impact as a unity. This mode of speaking is found at the opposite pole from transactional and is known as poetic language. One hypothesis that has been advanced is that as they progress through school, children are forced to speak in transactional language with little attention paid to encouraging expressive or poetic talk. Most younger children in school will be talking chiefly in an expressive way as they find it difficult to abstract themselves from a situation. Consequently, in the analysis of their speech, it is necessary to introduce two transitional categories: expressive-transactional and expressive-poetic. The chief clue as to whether children are tending toward the transactional or poetic is the use of the concepts "participant" and "spectator". Britton distinguishes between these roles:

> "Both 'spectator' and 'participant' then are used in a special and restricted sense: 'participant' is the key word to mark out someone who is participating in the world's affairs; 'spectator' is the label for someone on holiday from the world's affairs, someone contemplating experiences, enjoying them, vividly reconstructing them perhaps - but experiences in which he is not taking part."[5]

Children's talk in my classroom was examined to determine the kind of talk which occurred in various situations.

Before I go any further, you should know something about my class. This grade two class contains children that performed in grade one at an average or low level. Many of this group turned seven from November to February of this school year. Two children are repeating the grade. Several children have emotional problems arising out of difficult home situations or family break up. They are mainly from middle income families in which the majority of the fathers are skilled technicians or office workers. Two-thirds of the children are bussed from a new community ten miles away.

At the beginning of the year, tiredness and restlessness made any kind of group work a real problem. Non-directed construction activities rapidly deteriorated into scraps or, at least, to inattention. Short daily periods using the Peabody Kit Level II for Language Development[6] and the DUSO Kit (Developing Understanding of Self and Others)[7] that help develop discussion techniques were very useful in bringing about more cooperative group work. The children were also encouraged to work with partners for illustrating stories, craftwork, and reading each other's work. After seven months of daily practice, group discussions often reached intended objectives. Children enjoyed working with each other on projects and sought out ways in which they could work together.

The enthusiasm which the class had for shared work was probably the result of several factors. The teacher and class members now shared the same expectations about what was to be accomplished in school. In the broadest sense, the children began to understand that they were there "to learn" (as defined by the teacher) and that they needed "to produce" in relation to their abilities and background. In addition, with two-thirds of the class being bussed and not knowing each other initially, the social

patterns of the class took some time to develop. At first, talk was used to defend selves and to establish positions. Eventually it became a means of establishing links to common experiences and strengthening social interaction. Certainly, the teaching of discussion skills and the group work encouraged by the teacher appeared to facilitate an open social system in the class.

It seemed that the children finally decided that working in pairs or small groups was a productive way to learn. This was in accord with the suggestion that talk is a powerful tool for learning. In talking together children are acquiring the heuristics of learning as they organize their immediate environment and share their perceptions of experience. Britton argues strongly "that the talk of young children is the direct precursor of their later thinking".[8] It is on the flow of talk that children can work their way through a problem, explore alternatives, formulate questions, and come to tentative conclusions. It follows then that the more opportunities for talk, the more opportunities for learning. I am not sure whether the children sense this or just have more fun working together, nevertheless, they now try to organize the class with cooperative grouping as much as possible.

What I have done is taped and transcribed the following group activities in my class which represent several subject areas and kinds of lessons:

1. A lesson on urban renewal - The House Biter - reading
2. A picture study on deep-sea diving - social studies/language
3. Discussions following a visit to an indoor rodeo - social studies/ language

A DIRECTED READING LESSON

One of my first attempts at taping was a reading lesson which I chose to help the class get used to taping procedures. When the lesson was completed the children wanted to hear the tape and enjoyed listening to themselves.

Teacher: This morning we started a story about a large machine. What special thing did it do? Timothy?
Timothy: It bites old houses that are really old, wrecked.
Teacher: Yes, and once it takes a bite out of them, what happens to them, Tim?
Tim: They fall down.
Teacher: And in their place, what do you suppose goes up? Derrick?
Derrick: A new house.
Teacher: It could be a house. What else could it be if it's downtown?
Timmy: A school.
Teacher: Yes, what do you think, Pam?
Pam: A police station.
Teacher: Perhaps. Richard?
Richard: An apartment.
Teacher: Yes, and in place of the old house if they build an apartment, what would be the big difference? Timmy?
Timmy: It might go four stories high and a house is only one or two stories.
Teacher: Alright, so it takes more space going upwards, so what do you think about the number of people that can live there?
Tim K: About 4 in a house.
Teacher: About 4 in a house but how many in an apartment? Corry, what do you think? I haven't heard from you.
Corry: 60.
Teacher: Perhaps 60, do you think there would be more? Timmy?
Timmy: 40.
Teacher: Perhaps, there might be less or more.
Timmy: There might be 90.
Teacher: Yes, think of some of those tall ones you see downtown.
Timmy: Oh yeah, like a skyscraper.
Teacher: Right.
Pam: About 100 people.
Teacher: Yes, and even more. Yes, Timmy.
Timmy: 500.
Teacher: Maybe even up to that many. What's the name of our story today, Richard?
Richard: The House Biter.
Teacher: Would you start please with a strong voice.
(Richard reads)
Teacher: We'll have Derrick now.
(Derrick reads)
Teacher: So they're tearing down all these old buildings. Let's hear from Pam.

(Pam reads)
Teacher: Now can you read that so that the lines go a bit together. How about trying that again.
(Pam reads)
Teacher: How do you feel about that little house?
Timmy: I don't know. Happy to see it out of the way.
Teacher: You'd like to see it changed then, and a bigger building put there. Does anybody feel rather sad about the building?
Voices: No.
Teacher: None of you do. You do a bit? Do you like old buildings?
Tim K: So does Richard.
Teacher: Alright, would you please read now, Timmy K.
(Timmy K. reads)
Teacher: What do you think it might be in the way of?
Tim K: Of a road or something.
Teacher: Of a what, dear?
Tim K: Of a road.

This excerpt from a transcript is typical of guided reading lessons where the teacher exerts complete control through questioning the children to check comprehension. You will note that the teacher makes about fifty percent of the utterances with most being questions and the remainder being of an encouraging or regulatory nature. There is in this structured sequence requiring the children to recall detail from the story an opportunity to relate experience to concepts being developed. The children express their uncertainty about the actual size of apartment buildings and skyscrapers through the guesses of from forty to 500 people living in them. Still, they have the general concept that apartments are larger than houses so they will contain more people. Some children appear to have had this concept broadened and strengthened through the talk that occurred. The teacher touches on attitudes toward old and new buildings and seems somewhat surprised at the immediate negative responses toward old buildings. With a little encouraging, Tim K. indicates some liking for old buildings, but quickly, so he won't be isolated, identifies a friend who shares his interest.

Since the group is sharing an immediate experience related to this story being read, the discussion is in an expressive style tending occasionally toward transactional. The children are not encouraged to talk at length or share their perceptions.

A PICTURE STUDY ON DEEP SEA DIVING

The next example is a whole class lesson using a picture of two happy, excited children wearing skin diving equipment. The children, accompanied by an enthusiastic looking dolphin, are swimming toward an ornate old chest. The water is murky green with various ocean flora and fauna in evidence. The purpose of this lesson is to have children note details and discuss the picture in terms of what may be happening. What follows is not the complete lesson:

Teacher: Let's take a look at this picture.
Tim K: I already have.
Teacher: Tell me, what kind of animal are the boy and girl near? Kurtis?
Kurtis: A seal.
Teacher: Do you have an idea about that too, Pam?
Pam: A dolphin.
Teacher: Yes, it looks more like a dolphin. Any ideas why it would be a dolphin rather than a seal, Kim?
Kim: Friendly.
Teacher: Shannon.
Shannon: It shows people when they can't find their place, their way out in a ship, to show the way back to the mainland.
Teacher: That's something that we have heard the dolphins have done.
Anna: They help people out of traps.
Teacher: Can you tell me anything about the way it looks that it is a dolphin rather than a seal? Anna?
Anna: A seal doesn't have a thing on its back.
Teacher: Yes, and do you know what that word is called?
Anna: It's called fins.
Teacher: Alright, it is a dolphin. Dolphins live only in salty water.
Teacher: Therefore where are the boy and girl?
Kim: Water.
Tim K: Sea.
Teacher: So they must be at the sea or in some salt water.
Shannon: I like salt water because it's always warm.
Teacher: Why do you know that this must be a sea? What information have you got to know that? Sandy?

Sandy: There's some treasure in it.
Teacher: Okay, but there may be treasure down durther at a lake. It is was a big enough lake. Richard?
Richard: Because there's usually pilot fish down there.
Teacher: What kind of fish?
Richard: Pilot.
Teacher: Do you see any? Yes. That's something else that lives in salt water. Tim?
Tim: Because of that.
Teacher: Can you tell me what that is?
Joanne: Oh, I know.
Lisa: It's some kind of some kind of rock.
Voices: Seaweed.
Teacher: We see seaweed, we see pilot fish and a - ?
Voices: Dolphin.
Teacher: So those are three reasons?
Voices: And turtles.
Voices: And tortoises.
Teacher: Yes, what are these with shells?
Voices: They're oysters.
Teacher: Very likely oysters and clams. Now we have lots of information that this is a sea.

Although this lesson was controlled by the teacher, there is more evidence of freedom and creativity in the children's oral expression than in the previous excerpt. The teacher made thirty-eight percent of the comments, and, compared to the reading lesson, there are fewer regulative comments and questions. The role of the teacher is to guide, encourage, extend the children's oral expression, and focus on accurate comments.

Previous experience and shared information help the group to grow in their understanding of the picture. Kim, Shannon, and Anna clarify for the group the concept of a dolphin. From experiences with the DUSO Kit which features a friendly dolphin and other knowledge, they state physical and social attributes which are acceptable to the teacher and the rest of the group. Sandy, Richard, and Lisa start to identify characteristics of undersea life which encourages the rest of the class to chime in with many attributes until it is clear that the

group agrees on the setting of the action. Through this oral exercise the children are practising mental operations such as identifying, differentiating, comparing and contrasting, and generalizing which could well be eventually incorporated into their ways of thinking.

Again, the situation is face-to-face discussion focused on an immediate stimulus. The bulk of the interaction would have to be classified as expressive with more of a trend toward expressive-transactional than in the previous example. Shannon moves toward expressive-poetic when she, seemingly out of context, volunteers "I like salt water because it's always warm". Since this is the only contribution Shannon makes to this part of the lesson, it could well be a reflection of past experience - the recalling of an enjoyable experience. Shannon is taking the role of spectator rather than entering the scene.

Later in this lesson, the group hypothesises about ways to retrieve the treasure:

Tim K:	How would they get the treasure up?
Voices:	They could go through pick it up they carried it
Domingus:	No way, it's too heavy.
Teacher:	He's quite strong though, is there any place they could put it on to?
Raymond:	Nope.
Derrick:	Yep.
John:	On the back and they could carry it.
Derrick:	They could hold it.
Teacher:	They could anchor it on either side. Yes.
Kurtis:	Or they can use a machine.
Richard:	Can be a machine and one kid will have it on his hand and then and then they would could hook it up and then another girl or boy would hook it up on the other side and lift it up.
Teacher:	Okay, it sounds pretty imaginative, Richard. Somebody else has an idea. Domingus?
Domingus:	They have walkie talkies and they talk to them up there.
John:	A walkie talkie and an anchor.
Voices:	Some ropes.

The above illustrates the power of talk to generate alternatives and to elaborate ideas. Tim K. asks the question while others suggest superficial and fragmentary solutions. Domingus introduces a note of reality with his statement about weight which causes the group to explore alternatives and look at the

problem in more depth. Richard in a long statement summarizes for the group and they go on to more details about communication with the surface. Clearly this group is growing in their ability to attack and solve problems through verbal interaction. This group effort at understanding establishes successful methods of attacking a problem which may be used again and again - eventually being incorporated into thought patterns. In this way talk, by expanding and extending the insights of each child, becomes a basis for learning and the acquisition of mental operations.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION FOLLOWING THE INDOOR RODEO

I had been wondering how small groups operated without an adult present. A visit to the Indoor Rodeo gave me an opportunity to set up a situation where, on our return, several groups were established to discuss the visit in terms of what they had seen what was particularly interesting, and how they felt about the excursion. The discussion was to be followed by a drawing or storywriting session where the children would reproduce their impressions of the rodeo. Another teacher, who had not accompanied the class, worked with one group while I supervised the others trying not to direct or inhibit their discussions. Parts of three tapes follow which convey the surprisingly (to me) wide range of talk, social interacting, and learning that occurred:

Teacher: What else can you tell me about what happened. Go ahead, let's just start talking.
Timmy C: Well, they were cattle wrestling.
Teacher: What is cattle wrestling?
(A lot of voices at this point, not clear as to what was said.)
Sandy: The cowboys try to ride the horse and they try to wrestle like a bull or a cow.
Tim K: Cattle, a steer.
Joanne: And they twist his neck.
Teacher: Did you like it?
Tim K: Just like a screw.

Teacher: Why didn't you like it?
Timmy C: It upset me, I thought they were going to kill him, especially in the neck.
Teacher: Sandy, what else happened?
Sandy: I can't remember.
Teacher: Nothing that's _____?_____(pause?)
Timmy C? Something funny.
Teacher: What was funny?
Timmy: Bull fight.
Richard: A guy, he got a cape you know and he thought he was going to fight with a great big bull, you know and two little bulldogs come running (Giggle, giggle, laughter) and the bulldogs were alive and wanted to chase him. He didn't like it and runs back out. (Giggle, giggle) and he was fighting with balloons.
Teacher: Balloons?
Richard: Yeah and he was jumping on the balloons and bang, bang, bang, bang
Teacher: What else?
_____: And one of them _____.
Richard: He had one and he gave someone a black one, and he popped it and he said "That's not fair to the black one", so the guy on the tower said, "Is there anyone out there who has some more friends?" and the clown comes right in and chokes.
Teacher: Where was the guy?
Richard: He was up someplace.
Timmy C: I know.
Teacher: Where?
Timmy C: Up, you know where the games are, where the hockey games are, where they tell who got the score and everything.
Teacher: What was he doing?
Tim K: He was watching the football game.
Teacher: What was the man doing, though?
Tim K: Oh, he was talking.
Teacher: Telling you about the show?
Voices: Yeah.
____: See you _____.
Teacher: Did he?
_____: Yeah.
Richard: An then this clown came out with lots f balloons. (Giggle, giggle)
Joanne: And then they all popped.
Teacher: They all popped.
Tim K: (Giggle) Jumps on them like crazy.
Teacher: Is that right? Wasn't the bulldog frightened of the balloons?
All voices: No.
Teacher: What were some of the sounds that you heard? What type of sounds did you hear?

In this excerpt the children are eager to share their experiences with the teacher. The flow of their group reminiscing is dammed and diverted by the teacher's questioning for detail and clarification. The request for a

definition of "cattle wrestling" seems legitimate, but the question relating to the location of the announcer was an unprofitable sidetrack that stifled the animated story of the clowns, balloons and bulldogs. The further question about sounds entirely shifted the children's thought to a topic that didn't interest them at all. After some silence and a few desultory comments, they came up with another interesting topic - bucking broncos. They pursued this until the teacher switched them again.

When children are full of a story and telling it cooperatively, it seems that the teacher should restrict himself to encouraging comments, the occasional clarifying or valuing question, and be very hesitant about controlling or directing the story. Although the teacher made about forty percent of the utterances, he was clearly dominating the pattern of exchange. The type of interaction that resulted from this session seems to be expressive with tendencies toward expressive-transactional as the teacher asks for details, interpretations and explanations.

The second transcript in this series was made by five children working on their own.

Kim:	You guys!
Michael:	The horses came out - I felt like to jump on them - because I love horses. And Richard said one of them horses are his horses. But most of all I loved the bucking horses.
Shannon:	I like the bulls.
Kim:	How about you Derrick?
Derrick?	I like the bull fighter - went out and those two bulldogs with the paper horns came out after that bull fighter.
Michael:	My new hat.
_____:	Oopsadaisy! (They are playing with the mike.)
Kim:	How about you Shannon?
Shannon:	I liked the bulls and the bucking broncos.
Kim:	Okay, Derrick?
Derrick:	And the little dogs.
Kim:	Anybody want to say anything else?
Michael:	Yeah, I hate you (giggle, giggle).
Kim:	Wh - wh - what did you like?
Shannon:	I liked everything.
Kim:	What did you like, Derrick?
Derrick:	- - Silence.

Kim: Come on, Derrick!
Michael: I liked that about the _____
Teacher: Make sure you don't touch this or it turns your mike off.
Michael: You mean it was off all the time?
Teacher: It may have been. Go ahead now.
Shannon: _____ask the questions now, or should I tell you what did you like over there?
_____: Who's going to ask the questions?
Teacher: What did you like, Shannon?
Shannon: I like it when the bucking brontos started to buck everybody off. I thought one of them were going to be bucked off.
Kim: What about you, Derrick?
Kim: How about you, Michael?
Michael: Nothing's gonna be _____.
Derrick: Look at it go like this.
Lisa: Do it all over again.
Michael: Hey, do it again.
Kim: Okay, what do you like, Michael?
Lisa: You'll break it.
Michael: Um - let me see. Oh, yeah.
Shannon: Bucking brontos?
Michael: Bucking broncos, not brontos.
(Laughter) BRONCOS
Shannon: BRONTOS (Laughing)
Michael: Okay, quit rhyming on the side.
Kim: Okay, Lisa, do you like the colours?
(Confused sounds.)
Shannon: I'll tell you the colours that I liked.

- - Break in transcript - -

Kim: Shannon?
Shannon: When I'm gonna write my story, I'm gonna write it about the little dogs that were chasing that man and doing the bull fighting.
Kim: You, Derrick?
Shannon: I will write about when the cowboys wrestled the cows.
Kim: You again, Shannon?
Shannon: Let Michael have a turn now.
Kim: Lisa?
Lisa: I'm gonna just _____.
Shannon: Let's just leave Lisa out. (Voice over.)
Lisa: I'm gonna _____(she stops).
Kim: Okay, Michael?
Michael: Um - what didya - I don't know what you're talking about. You didn't say anything.
Kim: STORIES - we're going to make a rodeo.
____: I'm going to write about the bronco-bucking bronco.
_____: I'm going to write about those calf that chokes.
Shannon: You, too, Kim and Lisa try it.
Lisa: I'm going to write about _____(pause).
Shannon: Hurry up.

Lisa: The little bulls - with their little horns.
Kim: Good.
Shannon: I'm going about them. I like the best part where the little dogs were chasing that man.
Kim: What's yours?
Michael: I already said it twice - the bucking bronco, you nut!
Kim: Oh, dear.

- - break in transcript - -

Although the teacher is not present, this group operates in an extremely constrained manner. It is almost as though they have learned their group skills too well (i.e. taking turns, only one at a time speaking, bring in those who aren't talking) and are concentrating on those to the detriment of their discussion. This may have happened because Kim took on the role of group leader or teacher. She controls the discussion by calling on group members, ignoring extraneous comments or behavior, and sticking doggedly to the point. The entrance of the teacher throws the group off pace for a bit, but Kim successfully ignores Shannon's bid for leadership and keeps the group going. Kim and Shannon dominate the discussion with Kim making about thirty percent of the utterances and Shannon twenty percent.

There is little evidence of continuity of thought or building on each other's experience. Kim may have learned some of the forms of group control, but she uses them to inhibit rather than to encourage thought. Michael seems to find the whole situation constraining after his initial enthusiastic response which could have set the tone for a profitable group experience. He manages to help Shannon learn the correct pronunciation of "broncos", but by the conclusion of the second excerpt his patience and toleration of Kim are wearing thin.

As the group is recalling shared experience and identifying favourite happenings, the mode of expression is expressive. One might think that this

would tend toward the poetic, but, in fact, because of Kim's organization and Shannon's rejection and eventual acceptance of Lisa, there are tendencies toward expressive-transactional talk.

In my eyes this session was a complete success, however, as it produced a breakthrough for Kim. Until this point, Kim had placed herself on the periphery of class activity. Her work habits had been poor; she hadn't been working anywhere near her capacity; and she had been sullen and disruptive. Whether this particular session was the turning point for Kim is impossible to know. Yet, it did demonstrate her ability to lead and cooperate as well as her acceptance by others. Lately, we have seen a new Kim at school - cooperative, friendly, and showing some pride in her work. Her success is probably a combination of recently learning to read and her discovering, through talk, that she could work with others and that the rest of us did accept and even like her.

The final excerpt in this series may be the most successful in demonstrating a free flow of talk and joy in utterance. During the taping, this group appeared noisy, disorganized, and splintered as several children seemed to speak at once. On listening to the tape and attempting to analyze what had happened, I was pleased to note that a good deal had occurred as you will see:

Teacher: What are your ideas about that? Start Talking! Nicoletta.
Nicoletta: I like the little bull with the balloon.
Teacher: I'm not going to listen. You must keep talking to each other about what you did this morning.
Nicoletta: I liked the little bulls. They were really nice.
Domingus: I liked the neat ones. They go (he trills at this point).
Kurtis: Yeah, and they came in and their horns poked in the blue.
Domingus: Hey, did you see that girl that went in and tried to get up and they went waugh, waugh (mooing sounds).
_____: Sounds of laughter and agreement.
Domingus: Yeah, I liked the poodle that went (whinnying sounds) and it goes up (whoa sounds).
Cory: I liked the back horse rider.

Kurtis: I didn't like the bucking bronco.
_____: Bucking bronco.
Nicoletta: Yeah, me, too!
_____: (Mooing sounds in background.)
Kurtis: Those two horses and two ambulance drivers_____.
_____: (Laughter and mooing sounds.)
Kurtis: And John said, "Hi, little horse." (Falsetto for quotation.)
Kurtis: He said it and I was sitting by him.
Domingus: Yeah, and I like pht! phtt!
Hey, did you see that big cow? And it was trying to get out of there and it was moo, moo, moo!
Kurtis: I like when John said, "Hi, little cow." (Laughter.)
Domingus: Hey, and I got to pet one of the horses. Horses came back and I pet them.
_____: Yeah - (Mooing sounds.)
_____: Indistinct talk about clowns in the back round.
Domingus: I like that other one where that, hey_____
Kurtis: I liked that clown when its pants fell down. Oh, yeah. (Laughter.)
_____: (Mooing sounds.)
Domingus: That horse, yeah, yeah.
Cory: And I liked that horse, he sat down, down, down_____
Rachelle: Yeah, and he said check his heart and he smelt his bum and he went - yuk.
_____: Exclamations and laughter.
Cory: You silly!
Domingus: Yeah, and he tried it again. (Sound of deep breath and more laughter.)
Domingus: I like it when he died and he says, "My horse died, my horse died."
_____: (Laughter and indistinct comments.)
_____: Then he got on it.
_____: Yeah.
Domingus: Then the cow goes moo, moo.
Rachelle: Didn't he give it a kick in the mouth?
Kurtis: And then he went moo, moo.
Kurtis: He never even made a word.
Nicoletta: Yeah, and then he pulled his tail and then the horse came up.
Rachelle: He never pulled.
Cory: He winded up the tail.
Domingus: And then the other man says, "Crank him up." So he cranks him by the tail.
_____: (Laughter.)
Nicoletta: So he got up and he was dancing the horns.

- - Break in transcript - -

Rachelle: I hated how those, uh, poor calves had, uh _____
Nicoletta: Yeah.
Rachelle: The horses were tugging them from the back.
Nicoletta: Yeah.
Kurtis: And they had to wait for five seconds.
_____: Yeah.
Teacher: Was that during the calf roping?
Voices: Yeah, yeah.

Domingus: I liked bucking (more action sounds).
Nicoletta: Oh, I hate that!
Cory: And then they have to go like this, whoosh, whish.
Nicoletta: I hate that.
Domingus: That's what I'm gonna be - I'm gonna catch cows.
Nicoletta: All they do is grab their legs.
Domingus: No, they don't grab their legs. They grab their heads and they just go like that and they go swish, swish, swish.
Kurtis: No, they twist their horns.
Nicoletta: No, their feet.

- - break in transcript - -

Rachelle: I like, umm, I like all the things that the clowns did.
Nicoletta: When they turn their hands around.
Domingus: Yeah.
Rachelle: That was neat
_____: (More mouth sounds).
Cory: And remember that big calf or bull; they had to turn its head around.
Domingus: Man, did you see that giant, giant cow.
Nicoletta: Yeah, yeah.
Rachelle: Yeah and how can they, how come they had that dark patch on the horses. Yecch!
Domingus: Because, umm, they burnt 'em.
Cory: I know.
Domingus: No, 'cause there is a number on it.
Kurtis: They have to get a number on it.
Domingus: That's a number. They got this real steaming thing. The horses got. They put the horses to sleep and they just go sheee.
Rachelle: Then they take it off them.
Domingus: They take it off and the horse comes back and the horse starts jumping around, I think.
Kurtis: I know that's how they make them _____
Domingus: I like where the cow went moo, moo.
_____: (Animal sounds).
Nicoletta: I like it when that little calf came running to the man.
Domingus: Yeah, that little calf was running (mouth sounds).
Nicoletta: When they did the roped, the roped calf_____
Domingus: Lassoed the calf.
Domingus: Yeah, I hate that part when that man, when that man, when that man on the white stallion got bucked off.
Cory: Yeah, and he was afraid of that little thing.
Domingus: What little thing?
Cory: That little dog.
Kurtis: No, he was just faking it.
Nicoletta: I know.
Domingus: Who was just faking it?
Kurtis: Just to make people laugh.
Rachelle: Yeah.
Domingus: I like when the big bull (snort, snort).
Nicoletta: Remember that clown?

Domingus: Yeah, so do I.
_____: I liked that part, I liked that part, it's a real sad part.
Domingus: I don't like the sad part. It's real awful when that man on the white stallion, he got bucked off.
Nicoletta: He got bucked off.
Cory: I remember how that, that guy bucked into the fence.
Rachelle: Yeah, he jumped onto the elephant, uhh, the horse's back and then he fell.
Domingus: He didn't.
Rachelle: Yes, he did.
John: Wasn't no elephant.
Nicoletta: Then he kicked, the horse kicked him off and fell _____.
_____: Yeah _____
Domingus: O.K. John, you talk about something.
Nicoletta: Oh, that was a bad.
Cory: What was it?
_____: A match.
John: That's mine, I brung it from home.
Domingus: Oh, sure.
Rachelle: I can stick _____
John: I did.
Rachelle: I can stick a needle through my hand.
John: I got it from my brother.
Domingus: I like, I like the part _____umm _____
Rachelle: Now can we listen to it?

- - Recorder turned off at this point - -

In their vivid reconstruction at the rodeo with accompanying sound effects, the children are enjoying again the high points of their common morning experience. Although the transcript cannot do justice to the enthusiasm and simultaneous utterances, it does begin to convey the flow of speech and melding of experience. Although Domingus and Kurtis appear to be engaging in a dialogue, the rest of the group were talking in a parallel way on the same theme or expressing agreement. The children were not performing nor recounting for anyone other than themselves. Their joyous recall of the situation was for their own ends. They were both entertainer and entertained in a spectator type of situation.

Further, their use of sounds verges on fantasy, while gestures accompany the vocalizations to create a complete whole. The group's unity

in expression and unfettered stream of speech exemplifies the words of Oakeshott:

> And to speak is to make images. For, although we spend much of our early days learning the symbolic language of practical intercou se . . . this is not the language with which we begin as children. Words in everyday use are not signs with fixed and invariable usages; they are poetic images. We speak in heroic language of our own invention, not merely because we are incompetent in out handling of symbols, but because we are moved not by the desire to communicate but by the delight of utterance.[9]

It is the pleasurable recall of a happy experience combined with "delight of utterance" which makes this excerpt so interesting to me. "Yeah" as an expression used as a means of sympathetic circularity (i.e. showing agreement and acceptance) permeates the discussion. It is unusual to note that very little disagreement in fact occurs in the discussion with most of it coming near the conclusion when the topic suddenly ceases to generate interest. It is this wholeness of purpose and expression which tempts me to suggest that, although the discussion is rooted in a shared experience with face-to-face exchanges, the form of expression moves from the expressive to the expressive-poetic. Certainly there are occasions when the discussion tends toward the expressive-transactional. For example, Rachelle asks about the brand on a horse and has it explained to her by Domingus in a way that may not be entirely accurate, but satisfies her and the group's desire to make meaning from the situation. It may not have satisfied Domingus as he rather forcefully changes the subject when Kurtis seems slightly inclined to pursue the matter.

Generally, the level of discourse is recall of the events, but the group does see beyond the specifics to empathise with cowboys and cattle who appear to be roughly treated. In addition, they understood the purpose of the clowns as entertainers, although they don't seem to grasp their

significance as distractors of the bulls during the bull-riding events.

The activity of this group demonstrates to me that it is possible for an undirected group of grade two children to revel in their recall of a past event while broadening their comprehension of the experience.

REFLECTIONS ON THE THREE GROUPS

What have I learned from this analysis of the workings of three groups discussing from a common basis? Clearly, there is a variability in the actions of the groups that I cannot fully explain. Each group was successful, but the criterion for the success was different. The group with the teacher shared their experiences and reacted to the questions mostly with enthusiasm. The children expressed themselves freely and accepted the constraints and directions imposed by the adult. The second group seemed very task-oriented and constrained in their reactions to the rodeo. Their talk indicates that some learning takes place, but the major success is the blossoming of Kim as a cooperative leader and respected group member. The third group's success lies in their ability to use speech as a flexible instrument to recreate and enjoy past experience as well as to build new meanings from experience. They were uninhibited, free-flowing, and responsive to one another in a way that built a pleasurable and rich learning experience for all.

What mixtures of experience, personalities, and settings lead each group to a different interaction are impossible to delineate clearly. Yet, it seems that the two groups without an adult present had as important or more important learning experiences than the one with an adult. Although it would be dangerous to generalize from this one instance, one could hazard the suggestion that children function well on their own in small

groups. As a corollary, one could suggest that teacher's actions in small groups could be tailored to the function of the exercise and that one does not always have to be directing and probing to be teaching or to facilitate learning.

We see that children's talk in their particular groups leads to many outcomes depending on their perceived purposes. It helps to build and extend meanings as children work their way verbally through common experiences. It strengthens their ability to share meanings and to accept each other. It heightens their capacity to reflect and recall experiences in a satisfying way. When viewed in this light, talk is both valuable and powerful.

REFLECTIONS ON THIS PAPER

At this point I have less trepidation about sharing my experience and more knowledge about the power of talk than at its inception. I could go on at some length about what I perceive as the importance of talk in the classroom and what the children and I have learned. Further, the mechanics of taping and transcribing as well as the fun the class had in listening to themsleves could provide several pages of hints, suggestions and conclusions. However, I will confine myself to a few important observations because I have come to believe that the really significant and profitable aspects of studying children's talk are in the doing of it rather than in the reading about it.

Grade two children talk. The speech is immediate and close to themselves and well-rooted in their experience. Most of their talk in school, for this reason, will be classified as expressive. They have trouble abstracting, being detached, or speaking in generalized subject language.

they are mostly in the participant role in that the business of school goes on and they are part of it. Consequently, their speech when it moves from the expressive tends mainly towards the transactional. Only occasionally do they stop and reflect, recall or entertain in the spectator role. When this happens, their joy in expression is most apparent. Perhaps we as teachers can set the stage more often to encourage expressive-poetic talk by being content to sit and listen, sometimes encouraging, but always fostering children's natural verbal expression.

The factor that had most interested me was the control of talk in the classroom. Originally, I had thought that there would be three categories of control - teacher control, teacher-student shared control, and student control. Naturally, the type of control would depend on the situation and we would expect teacher domination in convergent lessons such as reading lessons and picture study aimed at developing certain concepts. This was indeed the case. The surprise came when I look at open-ended small group discussions with a teacher present. Here I had expected to see some shared control. It wasn't there. The adult still ran the show. It is as if we have a certain conception of teaching which impels us to question, probe, and generally structure all situations with children. It is almost as if we do not trust the children to learn anything without our help. From the observations of one group it seemed as though the teacher control was still there, even though the teacher wasn't. It seems we must be very careful about what models of grokup work we exhibit for the children. Fortunately, one group did take its freedom and begin to use it well. There was not question that they could work together, share together and evolve a productive situation under their own control. For me, the area of

shared control will need furhter work.

The Rosens[10] and Searle[11], among others, suggest that the presence of an adult raises the intellectual level of children's talk. The level of talk in most of the excerpts I used was on the lower end of the scale - recall and elaboration of detail. Nevertheless, there was comparing and contrasting as well as generalizing evident in the picture study. The final group discussing the rodeo also reached some generalizations about the experience although how they reached them remains a mystery. Certainly the conscious effort of the teacher to provide a model of thinking will hopefully enable children to internalize thought patterns which could make them independent problem-solvers. Groups without an adult present may make meaning through reaching a satisfying consensus which, incidentally, may not be accurate and which uses unidentifiable and unreplicable procedures. Although higher level thought does occur when young children work in groups, the presence of a teacher would provide the optimum condition for establishing verbal and thought patterns that will eventually enable the children to oeprate effectively independent of thoughtful and careful adult guidance.

Finally, I would recommend this method of studying talk in a classroom to other teachers solely on the basis of what you learn about yourself and your class. I try to know my children well and discuss their work and mark it in class with them. In the last few months of analyzing tapes, I have picked up subtle information about the children which helps me to work more effectively with them. Kim is an obvious case in point. I would have noticed her improvement eventually, but the tape was the first real evidence of her progress and allowed me to plan ways to reinforce her behavior.

John has always been a good worker who finishes his tasks accurately and effectively. His behavior on the tapes suggested that he was reluctant to share his knowledge and impatient with group processes. I now have him working with some of the less able children in math and helping them with their problems. He does it as a challenge and is learning to curb his impatience and to understand the problems of others. These two illustrate, in a modest way, what I consider to be the major advantages of studying children's talk.

This paper was begun with an assertion that talk is ubiquitous in the classroom and that, perhaps, teachers are doing most of it and controlling the rest. Our task as teachers in encouraging learning is to realize and use the process of talk to enhance the environment for learning. Talk helps to organize our immediate tasks, our patterns of thought and our interaction with others. We can use it as a powerful tool in our interactions with children, but more especially, we must nurture the use of talk by our children and trust them to generate and receive these same benefits.

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